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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/03): PLO: "NOT JUST AN ORGANIZATION"

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Main Stories:  
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All papers lead with photos and reports on the February 2 meeting of Palestinian Authority President Abbas, Egyptian President Mubarak and Saudi Foreign Minister Al Faisal in Cairo, noting simply that the leaders discussed Egyptian efforts regarding a Gaza truce and restoring Palestinian unity. Al Hayat Al Jadida's coverage adds that Abbas then headed to Paris for a meeting with President Sarkozy, while Mubarak and Al Faisal left for Abu Dhabi on an unscheduled trip. The paper quotes Abbas stating in Paris that he categorically rejects Hamas' call to replace the PLO with a new body, while Al Ayyam's front page highlights a quote by a Hamas representative in Lebanon confirming that the group wants immediate, practical steps implemented for PLO reform. Meanwhile, Al Quds provides a further read-out of the Paris meeting quoting Abbas' advisor Nabil Abu Rudaynah telling press that President Sarkozy expressed support for Abbas and that the two leaders discussed the role of France in the peace process, in light of the change in U.S. and Israeli administrations. Abbas added, according to coverage, that he hoped that the EU would play a "political" role in regional peace talks.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page cites news agencies in reporting on agreement between U.S. Middle East envoy George Mitchell and French Foreign Minister Kouchner on prioritizing efforts to reach a sustainable truce in Gaza. The report adds that Mitchell and Kouchner met in Paris on February 2 and that Kouchner stressed the need to accelerate efforts to open crossings between Gaza and Israel. Meanwhile, another article on the paper's front page notes that Hamas has agreed to a one year truce with Israel if the "siege" on Gaza is ended, but the group is "not in a hurry" to enter Palestinian unity talks.

President Obama is becoming more popular among "Egyptian Islamists," according to Al Arabiya's website, as noted on an inside page of Al Quds. Since his interview with Al Arabiya satellite TV, reporting contends that even radical Muslim Brotherhood leaders have voiced their hopes that Obama will deliver his first speech from a Muslim capital in Cairo, possibly at the Al Azhar mosque. Muslim Brotherhood General Advisor Akif, however, is quoted stating that he is not interested in Obama's speech nor in the choice of capital but rather in the content of Obama's Middle East policy. Reporting also quotes former Islamic Jihad leader Kamal Said noting that Obama's inauguration speech provides an opportunity for the "Islamic movement" to open dialogue with the West. Expressing similar sentiment, another "radical leader" appealed via his website to Al Qaeda to declare a truce with the U.S. as a gesture of good will towards President Obama, the report notes. President Obama says that most U.S. troops will return home from Iraq within a year, according to an inside report in Al Quds. Another inside AFP story quotes a U.S. National Security Council spokesman commenting on recent reports of secret contacts between President Obama's advisors with Iran and Syria. The NSC spokesman underscored that Obama gave clear instructions to his team not to initiate any contacts with foreign governments during the transitional period.

The three papers front page an AFP story reporting that International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has begun looking into alleged Israeli war crimes in Gaza. Moreno-Ocampo's office clarified on February 2 that that the action does not mean that an official investigation has been opened. The papers highlight that the ICC has received several calls from the

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Palestinian Authority and other parties requesting an investigation into possible war crimes.

Al Quds' front page runs February 2 statements by Israeli Defense Minister Barak confirming that Israel does not intend to wage a new offensive on Gaza in response to recent Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israel. In addition, all front pages quote Barak from a campaign rally on February 2, stating that he proposes the construction of a 48km tunnel under Israel to connect the West Bank to Gaza, adding that the tunnel would be under Israeli control while traffic inside would be controlled by the Palestinians. In further reporting on official Israeli statements, Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page reports that Israeli Foreign Minister Livni stated on February 2 that she expects the Obama administration to pressure Israel on reaching a regional peace agreement. Al Quds front page adds that Livni also called for the drafting of an Israeli peace initiative in Hebrew, "before an initiative in French, Arabic or English is imposed on Israel."

Al Ayyam runs a front page AFP story quoting Iran's President calling for a boycott of Israeli goods and warning of renewed Israeli "aggression" on Gaza.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page reports that the U.N. emergency appeal for Gaza has raised \$613 million in assistance. Reporting also notes that U.N. officials have again called for the opening of Gaza crossings and stressed that the body will investigate Israeli bombings of its facilities in Gaza.

Al Quds' front page reports that Israel has agreed to release most of the Palestinian prisoners on Hamas' list for a prisoner exchange deal that would free captured Israeli soldier Shalit. Jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti would be released, while "a few differences remain regarding the release of Hamas leaders," according to reporting.

The three papers front page reports on the Israeli military killing two Palestinians, one near the West Bank city of Hebron and another in Gaza. Eight additional Palestinians were injured in Gaza on February 2, papers note. -----  
BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Saad Muhayo opines in Al Quds under the title, "Erdogan 'lost it' but won the world": "The Davos Forum... is the secret

international government that controls the fate of all the world's  
s  
leaders and peoples... In Davos, Erdogan lost much of his  
credibility with the international, secret government, the Jewish  
lobby and the Turkish Army, but, he made an undisputed win of the  
leadership [position] of the Islamic world. It is true that this  
win won't translate into direct benefits in the arena of Turkish and  
Middle East geopolitics, but certainly it will ensure him a  
permanent seat of prominence in history."

2) Regular columnist Rajab Abu Sarayah opines in Al Ayyam under the  
title, "Not just an organization [PLO]: "Declaring a new political  
authority for the Palestinians, besides... deepening internal  
division, also strips the Palestinians of their moral authority at  
home and abroad and takes away the representation that is recognized  
at Arab, regional and international levels. It thereby further  
weakens Palestinians and strips them of their ability and  
aspirations to achieve national goals."

WALLES